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Letter dated 9 September 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations Office at Geneva, addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

As you know, the situation in East Timor in the wake of the results of the referendum has developed dramatically, and the Timorese people, lacking any kind of protection, are now being systematically persecuted in what can only be defined as ethnic cleansing.

Principal responsibility for United Nations action in East Timor of course remains with the Security Council, and Portugal has indicated its support for an expanded effort by the Council. Nevertheless, Portugal believes effective action to prevent further human rights violations must be a central element of the overall United Nations response to the tragedy in East Timor.

Having this in mind, as well as the competence of the Commission on Human Rights as the body with the main responsibility in addressing human rights violations in the United Nations system, Portugal requests the convening of a special session of the Commission.

My country has already started démarches with the States members of the Commission with a view to rallying support for the convening of the special session. We highly appreciate the efforts you have undertaken in the defence of the Timorese people and we ask for your support in promoting this special session.

(Signed): Alvaro MENDONCA E MOURA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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